

Nooksack Integrated Conservation and Enhancement Project

Resource Components



The NICE project proposes a mix of activities including timber harvesting as well as recreation and trail projects, road and access improvements, campground reconstruction/relocation, and habitat and watershed restoration activities that are consistent to the objectives indicated for each resource area. Our ability to implement actions on the landscape is influenced by laws, policy, and Forest Plan guidance (sideboards). The following is a summary of considerations when proposing actions within the project area:

AQUATICS

Objectives

- Maintain or restore natural processes and/or physical habitat for fish population in the North Fork Nooksack River.
- Protect water quality.
- Maintain in-stream flows later into season.
- Protect existing National Forest System infrastructure.

Sideboards

- **Clean Water Act**
 - Protect the identified beneficial uses of water.
- **Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest Plan, as amended**
 - Meet or exceed water quality regulations for waters of the US through the application of Best Management Practices.
 - Maintain in-channel and streambank stability.
 - Meet **Northwest Forest Plan Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives.**
 - Maintain and restore water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic, and wetland ecosystems.
 - Maintain and restore in-stream flows sufficient to create and sustain riparian, aquatic, and wetland habitats. The timing, magnitude, duration, and spatial distribution of peak, high, and low flows must be protected.
 - Maintain and restore the timing, variability, and duration of floodplain inundation and water table elevation in meadows and wetlands.

Example Actions

- Road relocation out of floodplain and off-channel habitat, removing artificial infrastructure that inhibits channel migration, upgrade and/or remove infrastructure that are physical barriers to fish migration
- Implement all applicable Best Management Practices per the Forest Service Best Management Practices Manual.
- Restore wet or mesic meadows by decreasing encroaching conifers.
- Bank protection at the Glacier Public Service Center



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FOREST MANAGEMENT

Objectives

- Facilitate development of old forest characteristics in mid-seral stands in Late Successional Reserves, including large trees and large snag potential, nesting structure, and structural complexity.
- Reduce habitat fragmentation by improving habitat function in mid-seral stands for connectivity and dispersal habitat adjacent to remaining old growth areas.
- Improve aquatic habitat function in Riparian Reserves by increasing the availability of future large wood.
- Improve stand resilience by managing density and species composition.
- Provide a diversity of habitat for wildlife including deer and elk, native pollinators, and neotropical migratory birds.
- Support local and rural economies by providing a reliable supply of timber through economically viable projects.
- Support the reserved rights and traditional uses of tribes by maintaining the availability of non-timber forest products.

Sideboards

- **Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest Plan, as amended**
 - Timber harvest (thinning) is allowed in Late Successional Reserve and Riparian Reserves, among other land use allocations, consistent with management objectives and Standards and Guidelines. Sustainable timber production is emphasized in Matrix.
 - Standards and guidelines favor the regeneration and management of western redcedar.
 - Opening size (for regeneration harvest) is limited to 40 acres.
 - Lands in Mountain Hemlock Zone (19) are considered unsuitable for timber production due to low productivity and difficulty of reforestation.
 - Thinning is allowed in Late Successional Reserve stands under 80 years old to enhance the development of late-successional characteristics, including commercial thinning, gaps (1/4 to 1/2 acre) on 3-10% of stand area, and heavy thin patches (1 to 3 acres) on 3-10% of stand area.
- **National Forest Management Act of 1976**
 - Maintain all forested lands in appropriate forest cover for multiple use sustained yield management.
 - Regeneration only after culmination of mean annual increment (usually 90-110 years old), with exceptions for specific management objectives.
 - Reforestation within 5 years after harvest.

Example Actions

- Commercial thinning of stands under 80 years old in Late Successional Reserves
- Creation of early-seral habitat through regeneration harvest in Matrix land use allocation
- Pre-commercial thinning of young stands to maintain tree growth rates for timber or Late Successional Reserve objectives
- Restoration of western white pine from seed of parent trees selected for natural resistance
- Enhancement of huckleberry stands in the mountain hemlock zone



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RECREATION

Objectives

- Provide and maintain safe, clean and reliable access to recreation features, facilities and infrastructure, which will serve as launching points for our guests to engage in various recreation activities and to connect with the Forest (nature / the great outdoors) in meaningful ways.
- Provide a full spectrum of recreation facilities to serve all of the recreation users, providing amenities where necessary and appropriate that allow the recreating guest to enjoy the natural setting while creating a sense of quality, comfort and security.
- Provide a broad spectrum of recreation opportunities, with an emphasis on those opportunities which require a natural setting.
- Plan for sustainable principles and strategies to be integrated into site location and design materials and elements of all new recreation features, facilities and infrastructure in order to promote long-term durability and effective and efficient operation and maintenance responsibilities.

Sideboards

- **Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest Plan, as amended**
 - Encourage other Forest resource activity planning such as road and timber sale development to incorporate plans to provide or improve compatible recreation facilities or services.
 - Developed recreation facilities will be administered and maintained to provide visitor safety and sanitation, protect facility and site resources, and provide for visitor recreation needs and convenience; while reducing unit costs.
 - Encourage the development and use of mass transit facilities to heavy public use areas, such as winter sports complexes. (ski resort and Sno-Parks)
 - Manage the transportation system at minimum standard necessary to provide for public safety.
 - Manage public use as necessary to protect resource values, provide a quality experience and provide for public health and safety.
 - Scenic quality will be maintained and gradually improved within the Mt. Baker Highway. Lands within this scenic corridor will be managed at a high visual quality level in both the foreground and middleground.

Example Actions

- Glacier Viewpoint Improvement – reestablish viewpoint.
- Hannegan Trailhead Repair and Improvement – reestablish vehicular access to trailhead.
- Heliotrope Trailhead Expansion – expand parking lot capacity and upgrade infrastructure.
- Excelsior Campground Decommissioning – Remove all group site recreation features and relocate them to a proposed expansion of Douglas-Fir Campground.
- Canyon Ridge Trail Relocation – re-route the trail out of a boggy wetland area.
- Damfino Trailhead Improvement – expand parking lot for truck/stock trailer turn around and enhance infrastructure.
- SnoPark Parking Lot Enhancement and Development – expand parking lots to accommodate better turn-arounds and more parking.
- Bridgecamp Relocation – relocate existing camp sites to the up-slope side of FS Road 37 and develop trails and day use areas on the river.



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WILDLIFE

Objectives

- Maintain and enhance habitat for federally listed species, focusing on spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat in designated critical habitat and Late Successional Reserves.
- Maintain and enhance habitat connectivity for a variety of species
- Maintain and enhance Riparian Reserve conditions for biodiversity and structural diversity of habitat conditions to support well-distributed populations of wildlife riparian associated species.
- Provide for a resilient landscape with a diversity of forests age-classes, including early seral

Sideboards

- **National Forest Management Act**
 - Provide for viability of all native species
- **Endangered Species Act, as amended**
 - Ensure such actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of listed critical habitat.
- **Migratory Bird Treaty Act/Landbird Conservation Plan**
 - Assess project actions that may affect avian species covered by these doctrines and their habitats.
- **Interagency Memorandum of Understanding on Grizzly Bear Habitat**
 - In regards to the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Area, the MOU between the Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stipulates that there is no net loss of core habitat (1997).
- **Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest Plan, as amended**
 - Protect and maintain nest sites actively used by raptors and other species of concern
 - Provide highest levels of deer and elk habitat capability possible while still meeting other primary resource objectives.
 - Provide sufficient numbers and sizes of live and dead trees to maintain primary cavity excavators at the 40% population level.
 - In addition to snags, large dead and down logs will be left.
 - Maintain areas which serve as connecting habitat or travel corridors for indicator species.
 - Meet **Northwest Forest Plan** direction
 - Design and implement watershed restoration projects in a manner that is consistent with Late-successional Reserves.
 - Meet Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives (focus on objectives #8 and #9)

Example Actions

- Thinning in second growth stand less than 80 years of age (both riparian and upland) to promote old growth characteristics, and to enhance habitat structure and diversity in Riparian Reserves.
- Implement Road and trail system objectives: Implement road closures from the Nooksack ATM for core habitat additions. Consider a change in the Canyon Ridge Trail use from motorized to non-motorized to provide additional core habitat and connectivity across landscapes.
- Create forage openings for deer and elk in second growth stands in matrix and pocket openings in LSR with variable retention regeneration harvests.
- Maintain parklands and promote huckleberry enhancement for bears to pollinators. Consider vegetation management in stands less than 80 years for contributions to opening that benefit early seral species and pollinators.



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